

VRS COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2015 – 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

GOODWILL EASTER SEALS MINNESOTA / GOODWILL BOARD ROOM

SESSION NOTES:

Committee Objective

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota's rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

- Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
- Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level that fosters equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis
- Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
- Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
- Consider input from subject matter experts in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
- Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
- Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources

2015 Community Partner Members (*listed alphabetically*): Heather Deutschlaender, Wendy DeVore, Kelly Dilger, Jeremy Gurney, Josh Howie, Amanda Jensen-Stahl/Lisa Guetzkow, Dan Meyers, Nick Monson, Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy and Lynn Vincent

VRS Members: Jay Hancock and Lori Thorpe

Sponsor: Kim Peck, VRS Director

Co-leaders: Chris McVey and Jan Thompson

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

2015 Schedule: Feb 27, Mar 27, Apr 24, May 29, Sep 25, Oct 23, and Dec 4.

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September 25, 2015 Session Objectives:

- ★ Facilitate a strategic advisory discussion on leading the greater Vocational Rehabilitation community in Minnesota to deepen and strengthen our collaboration and combined joint work, and to leverage the upcoming October statewide meeting to help encourage this momentum.
- ★ Share the current understanding of how new WIOA policy and regulations regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) may impact Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the greater vocational rehabilitation community.
- ★ Provide a preview of a system innovation pilot with VRS and ProAct within Dakota County as a potential model for assisting in transforming center-based work options into competitive, integrated work opportunities in the community.
- ★ Provide a conduit for sharing relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers

September 25 2015 Attendees (*listed alphabetically*): Wendy DeVore, Kelly Dilger, Heather Deutschlaender (afternoon), Lisa Guetzkow, Jeremy Gurney (morning), Jay Hancock, Josh Howie, Dan Meyers, Chris McVey, Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy, Jan Thompson, Lori Thorpe and Lynn Vincent **Guest:** Rich Wagner (afternoon)

Not in attendance: Kim Peck, Holly Sunderman

Facilitator: Holly Johnson

Agenda Topics:

1. Welcome / Overview
2. Advisory Discussion: Building Greater Statewide Community
3. Advisory Update: Pre-Employment Transition Services
4. Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics
5. Preview of System Innovation: VRS Pilot with ProAct in Dakota County
6. Wrap Up: Key Messages from Today

Adjourn @ 3pm

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Meeting Highlights:

- The Advisory Committee discussed the importance of effective collaboration and ongoing communication in the face of current and forecast significant changes resulting from the Minnesota Olmstead Plan and the draft WIOA regulations. The committee also reviewed the requirements for the WIOA Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) portion of the legislation.
- The committee previewed a new VRS innovation project pilot that combines the efforts and resources of multiple partners including VRS, ProAct Inc., Dakota County, and DHS. The pilot is based on a new concept that is being tested by the VR Program in the state of Ohio.

Next Steps:

- **Document Session Notes:** The facilitator will document the session notes for VRS Co-leadership review and approval for distribution to key audiences including the CRP Advisory Committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
- **Statewide Planning Teamwork Continues:** VRS CRP Advisory Committee members will continue work on the October statewide meeting planning effort including finalization of date, location and content.

Welcome and Opening

The committee opened with a welcome by co-leads Chris McVey and Jan Thompson. Chris announced that Lisa Guetzkow of Goodwill Easter Seals of Minnesota has been selected to complete the membership team of Amanda Jensen-Stahl who accepted a position within the VRS Extended Employment Program. Lisa is the Director of Employment Services for Goodwill Easter Seals. Chris and Jan asked Lisa to share a little bit about her background and welcomed her to the committee.

Facilitator Holly Johnson then asked members to share their responses to the session's warm up question... *what's **one thing (big or small)** that CRP Advisory members can do to connect with other community partners to help the entire statewide rehabilitation community of VR service providers understand, adapt as needed, and move forward with all the changes together successfully?*

Responses...

- sharing what we know that's helpful for others at the local placement partnership meetings around the state
- sharing best practices among placement supervisors, program managers and RAMs

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- a lot of us work on multiple committees, sharing the talking points we develop here when/where it makes sense
- job fairs have been productive in bringing partners together. example of 'Maxibility' Career Fair in Rochester where VRS, CRPs and employers come together to work on the bottom line: jobs for people with disabilities
- bringing together subgroups/focus areas such as IPS providers meeting at LifeTrack to connect and learn from each other
- organically developing groups to serve needs and opportunities as needs arise
- always keeping in mind that it's about the consumer, enduring commitment

Advisory Discussion: Building Greater Statewide Community

Jan Thompson led a discussion on the importance of coming together as a unified community to support consumers. She spoke of the power of moving forward as a community to tap into the collective resources, legislative understanding and services in the schools among other opportunities for greater impact. Recognizing the value of individual organizational mission statements and language, she talked about the potential of acting together with a shared, overarching purpose focused on consumers.

Julie Peterschick noted that knowledge is power and communication is vital to helping Minnesota understand what needs to change and where we have gaps to address. Chris McVey noted that efforts like IPS, local Placement Partnerships and Statewide Partners meetings are all effective ways to build relationships, to understand and weather through all the changes and challenges together.

Chris provided an update on the planning progress for a statewide meeting of VRS, CRPs and LUVs. A 'Save the Date' email has been sent to Executive Directors and Managers statewide for October 29th at the Shoreview Community Center. Unlike past Community Partners meetings, this statewide meeting will be hosted, planned and delivered by the VRS CRP Advisory Committee. The next planning meeting is scheduled for October 2nd.

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Advisory Update: Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS)

Jan Thompson provided an overview of the requirements from the draft WIOA regulations. She noted that according to Minnesota's Department of Education (MDE) there are ~40,918 students with disabilities in grade 9 through age 21 and not graduated from high school, who would qualify as 'potentially eligible' in the draft regulations. This is in contrast to the approximate total of 12,000 individuals, including ~4,200 transition youth, who are currently being served through VRS funded services.

Members discussed the various challenges and practices they are experiencing with transition youth services. Dan said they are working with St Paul Public Schools work coordinators to offer work based experiences for three week increments. Lisa noted that many schools struggle with knowing which competitive work skills and expectations are in demand, and how to help kids gain real work based experiences.

Julie added that it can be hard for schools to offer 'real' work experiences as often experiences schools provide do not include compensation and/or supervision. Wendy said that it's important for some transition youth to receive both the work experience and the post secondary education. In today's work world, a high school degree is not enough for many careers and advancement opportunities. She also talked about the number of parents and teachers who resist the idea of taking time from a transition youth's academics for work experiences.

Chris noted that the VR community is experiencing a true cultural change from simply getting 'people into jobs' toward careers and advancement. Jan talked about the need for the whole community and stakeholders to 'up our game' in advocacy to secure increased resources and funding to meet the needs and immense potential.

Kelly noted that Department of Labor has developed and posted a sample application for subminimum wage section on their website. Wendy spoke of the importance of engaging with employers to address employer concerns associated with payroll such as Workers Compensation that increase the real/perceived barriers for hiring people with disabilities. Julie added that the timing is right to engage with employers given the low unemployment level the state is currently experiencing. Many employers are looking for workers and if we can help address the 'liabilities' questions/concerns they have, we can connect more consumers with more employers for mutual benefit.

The advisory also talked about working with the hundreds of school districts to help them get ready for the PETS work and to work through 'the stress to get to the solutions'. Lynn mentioned the value of mentoring and the use of successful consumer stories to help schools understand and explore best practices.

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Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics

❖ **CRP updates:**

- Julie Peterschick
 - **Productive Alternatives Inc.** has hired three new staff to serve throughout the geographic area covered by the CRP. One of the new staff has ASL background. One position will be focused on IPS and the other two will be traditional services. Currently looking for a case manager in Little Falls.
- Lynn Vincent
 - **Courage Kenny** is implementing the software called EPIC as part of the integration with Allina. Bringing their consumer records into an electronic health records system and figuring out the differences has been a huge learning experience.
 - We've begun a new effort called 'Job Start' looking at how to partner with companies and agencies to create more work experiences. We're tapping into some big companies and excited about the potential.
- Lisa Guetzkow
 - **Goodwill Easter Seals** has added a new retail location in Brooklyn Center. It is both a job creator and a service expander.
 - They have recently completed a new pilot where two students successfully worked at the Mall of America Macy's. The pilot included onsite classroom instruction and on-floor experience with minimum wage compensation. The Macy's program is designed to offer another type of retail skills training than our existing program at Target. It took a year of relationship building and groundwork to get started with Macy's and we're optimistic that the pilot will be expanded.
- Wendy DeVore
 - **Career Ventures Inc. (CVI)** - has a staff of eleven people and the majority of our work has been through State Services for the Blind (SSB). CVI recently learned that their business will be dramatically reduced with the PETS requirements obligations SSB is attempting to fulfill. With this change, CVI is not able to sustain business revenue so CVI will be closing January 31, 2016. CVI is still open and working hard to provide intensive services for their existing clients so we can complete our work with them and/or transition them to other programs.
 - Going forward Wendy will be working as the new statewide director for extended services for deaf, blind, deaf and blind individuals at MEC (Minnesota Employment Center) where she worked previously 15 years ago. MEC is a unique collaboration with Rise serving as the fiscal agent and

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Lifetrack as the provider. Wendy will be a Lifetrack employee contracted with Rise to work for MEC.

- Wendy will be working at both jobs until the transition is complete. CVI is trying to help all their staff and consumers land safely. Wendy said that she is glad to have an opportunity with MEC as part of the vocational rehabilitation community to continue serving people.
- Kelly Dilger
 - **Options, Inc.** has 4 open full time positions: 2 job coaching and 2 assistant instructors for working skills.
- Dan Meyer
 - **Opportunity Partners** Dan's responsibilities now include overseeing the transition program.
 - With the new CEO Armando Camacho, Opportunity Partners has developed a new mission statement: "Together we advance the quality of life for people with disabilities." They have also developed a new vision: "People of all abilities thrive in the world."
 - OP has a new training offering focused on professional cleaning platform. The three week course on advanced cleaning includes training on carpet extractors, floor buffers, etc.
- Robert Reedy:
 - **Rise, Inc.** Robert has been consumed by the ERP system implementation. Rise is now using Care Director for their case management system. Robert estimates this has been taking over 20 hours a week of his capacity.
 - With the expansion of MEC to a statewide initiative, they are excited to have a work plan and person on staff. The best part is that Becky Bazarre started what has become a statewide initiative back in 1994 as a project and when the vision initiated it was always intended to be taken statewide. Robert said it is extremely exciting to have Becky's vision finally become reality. Added to the good news, Robert said that it is wonderful to see Wendy DeVore who has committed her life to this work join MEC.
 - Rise is working with the county to get Motivational Interviewing (MI) training for staff. They are also launching two communities of practice and looking at expanding next year to another six communities of practice. He noted the high expense required to certify an individual at the "MINT" level (Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers). There are only approximately 400 MINTs in the world.
 - Robert posed the question to the advisory committee regarding offering MI training/proficiency across the state along with creating integrated communities of practice. He noted how VRS has lead the way along with a few other CRPs and said there is no need to recreate the wheel/expense if

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we could find a way to collaborate as a community and build it together. While he acknowledged that many questions would need to be explored such as Who drives? Who champions? How to scale up? He believes that if we can get ~70% staff on the way to proficiency we will reach a system tipping point.

- He noted that Rise staffs are ecstatic about it and he has heard similar experiences shared by Goodwill Easter Seals, Courage Kenny and VRS. One of the ways Rise is embedding MI into their organization is to ask "How have you made MI part of your practice?" as a regular part of meetings to keep awareness high and share ideas.
- Josh Howie:
 - **Trillium Works!** teamed up with Light House this summer to put on a special summer camp for transition youth helping with the work experience side of things by creating job shadowing experiences for different types of jobs. Duluth's economy is really thriving so we have had no trouble finding jobs for all the people they are working with. We're serving more people than ever before.
 - Josh is currently training staff on placement to expand service capacity.
- Heather Deutschlaender
 - **Pro Act Inc.** has been undergoing a tremendous level of transformation helping consumers move from day services to more integrated employment. In addition, moving buildings has been a culture change as we're increasing interactions with our participants.
 - We are also involved in a quality improvement project for the county which includes developing an informed choice project.
 - Heather noted with low unemployment, it is becoming increasingly difficult to hire qualified staff.
 - Heather's responsibilities now include managing all enclaves.
 - The "Way to Work" Project is resulting in lots of meetings ramping up for this exciting initiative with Dakota County and VRS. (see next section for more)

❖ **DEED/VRS updates:**

- Jan Thompson, VRS Field Director:
 - Statewide Caseload Data from *10/01/2014 to 09/24/2015*:
 - **Employment Activities and Outcomes:** We have already surpassed our state annual goal of 2,894 employment outcomes with an actual number of 2,947 with about a week still left to go in the program year. This is super exciting to see and could not be done without the work of all the providers across the state... congratulations everyone!!

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Preview of System Innovation: VRS Pilot with ProAct in Dakota County

As one of the advisory committee's objectives to "promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level and foster equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis", the committee was given a preview of an emerging VRS pilot with CRP ProAct in Dakota County. The VRS pilot is designed to engage multiple partners to assist ProAct center based workers in Dakota County with exploring and moving into more competitive, integrated work. The pilot will be monitored to see what can be learned and scaled to other counties and providers.

Jay Hancock began the preview sharing a personal story about his first exposure to a person with a disability. He had a neighbor with a daughter with Downs Syndrome who was told after her birth that they had two options: to give up their daughter to the state hospital or to take her home but that would mean they would be "on their own". Some 20 years later, when Jay moved to Fairbault there was a state hospital that had more than 3,000 kids. There was also a huge cemetery with only numbers on slabs - no names. Jay spoke of the sadness that raised for him. Fast forward to today, even with the frustrations and uncertainties, WIOA is bringing new opportunities for greater services for people with disabilities than ever before. Next Jay walked the committee through the following numbers:

- 412,529... the population of Dakota County
- 10,099... the number of businesses with headquarters in Dakota County
- ~8,800... the number of people in Minnesota in-house work settings
- 400... the number of those in-house working at ProAct
- 108... the number of county case managers that work with consumers at ProAct
- 2... the number of VR counselors to be embedded at ProAct for this pilot
- 1... all focused on serving 1 consumer at a time

The idea for this pilot all started when VRS State Director Kim Peck came across a program in Ohio that has 25 VR counselors embedded within in-house programs across their state. Kim brought this example back to the VRS leadership team in January 2015. The team started exploring trying a similar approach in Minnesota.

Rich Wagner, RAM has been a member of the Employment Innovations Committee that has met monthly for a number of years. VRS selected ProAct for the pilot as the largest provider of in-house consumers in the county and based on their existing strong partnership in serving consumers with disabilities. Dakota County was been receptive to participating in the pilot concept. The pilot will begin end of October 2015 and is anticipated to last about a year.

Two full time VR counselors will be given office space at ProAct and Dakota County will provide a person to help their county case managers to work with VRS in securing

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employment opportunities in competitive, integrative settings. This includes Employment First training. The pilot goal is not simply the number of closures but rather it is to see how well this approach might work and if it is a model that could be expanded statewide. One VR counselor is a veteran and the other is new. Rich will be supervising the counselors. Abby Wells-Herzog, VRS Autism Specialist is going to be the pilot project manager. ProAct's leads will be Heather Deutschlaender and Carolyn Dobis.

In preparation for the pilot in Minnesota, Heather Deutschlaender and Rich Wagner will travel to Ohio in early October to shadow people at five different programs with direct care staff and their VRS/DHS staff to gather insights on how Ohio's experience might be used to develop the Dakota county pilot design.

Ohio started this approach in 2014. Similar to Ohio, Minnesota has a large geographic area to serve. Of the 1,200 Ohio applicants processed, there were 1,000 eligible, with 600 plans written, resulting in 85 placements with all new hires receiving at least minimum wage. This approach has been less expensive than the traditional VR applicant and the feedback from the disability community has been very positive.

We'll also be looking at Ohio's braided funding model to understand what has worked and what has presented challenges. Ohio's objectives early on were to identify barriers for employment in non-integrated work settings and ultimately put in \$1M to pull down more monies from RSA. The funding has been focused on strengthening relationships with other counties, developing provider skills, identifying consumer interests and supports needed. Ohio is also working on transition to seamless long term supports and were able to pull down more resources. Because Minnesota's VRS does not have any unmatched monies available, we're are trying the approach on a smaller scale to see if we can replicate and expand.

Dakota County is well connected with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and may be able to help with waivers changes in a way to help sustain the work and offer more opportunities. Dakota County is also supportive of person-centered planning and streamlining eligibility. As part of the pilot, we really need to know and understand the supports our consumers need. The pilot planning team is still determining how this project is going to communicate within the project as well as among the various partners of DHS, VRS, ProAct, and Dakota County. Overall we are undergoing this pilot to see what can we learn and what we can share. The collaborative spirit has been great so far and we're pretty excited about it. There is lots of energy and a lot of questions to figure out! Heather noted that ProAct will be hosting an evening to share information with families, consumers on October 20th. The pilot is anticipated to run for approximately a year.

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HANDOUT distributed to the VRS CRP Advisory Committee:

“Way to Work” pilot project to launch in October

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is preparing to launch a pilot project to encourage individuals with disabilities to transition from center-based work settings into community-based jobs. The project, called “Way to Work,” is expected to launch in October for individuals who are eligible for VR services in Dakota County.

The Way to Work project is based on a successful model that was developed and implemented in Ohio. It relies upon a strong collaborative partnership in which the public VR program and county staff work closely with center-based facilities to provide personalized career planning for individuals who want to move from center-based settings into community-based jobs. Using this approach, Ohio has achieved a substantial increase in the number of individuals with disabilities moving out of segregated work settings and into competitive integrated employment.

The Dakota County pilot project will test whether the Ohio model can be adapted successfully in Minnesota and whether we can find new and efficient ways to leverage funding to support more people in competitive integrated jobs in the community.

Under the Way to Work pilot project two VR counselors will be embedded in a facility work setting as part of a team that includes county staff and facility-based staff – all working closely with individuals to help them move into community-based jobs. ProAct Inc., which operates a facility in Eagan, and Dakota County Social Services will join VRS as the active partners in the pilot project.

How it works

Two VR counselors – one who will transfer from the Apple Valley VRS office and one new hire – will be embedded at the ProAct facility in Eagan. They will work with ProAct staff and Dakota County staff to identify individuals currently working in the facility who are interested in moving into community-based jobs. These individuals will then be invited to apply for VR services.

The model is built upon a person-centered philosophy of service provision that supports positive control and self-direction of people’s own lives. In the pilot project, the VR counselors will engage in person-centered assessment and planning for each individual to determine eligibility and to identify jobs that match an individual’s interests, strengths, and support needs – as well as a benefits analysis and information about work incentives to maximize earning potential.

The co-location of VR counselors at the facility is a key factor in the success of this model. The counselors become active members of each individual’s team, providing guidance and counseling throughout the career planning process. The embedded counselors also act as a direct liaison with county staff, ensuring ease of referral, streamlined eligibility, assessment and planning processes, and regular connection with individuals and their teams.

Who’s involved

Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Abbie Wells-Herzog, project manager; Rich Wagner, VRS manager in Dakota County; two VR counselors.

Dakota County: Megan Zeilinger, managerial oversight; one half-time person to work with staff.

ProAct, Inc.: Carolyn Dobis and Heather Deutschlaender

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Key Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community:

- We are thrilled to have already exceeded our state wide goal of 2,894 employment outcomes for this program year with 2,947 outcomes achieved as of September 24, 2015. With a few business days left, we're shooting to hit 3,000 outcomes by end of the fiscal year September 30th!
- We are a statewide community across a large geographic area composed of many individuals. We must continually look for the best ways to work together to serve the broad and dynamic range of needs across the state.
- We are uniquely able to do this work if we can combine forces and resources among key agencies, counties, employers, and service providers. We have to voice our messages over and over again so it will rise up and be heard at the legislature to achieve the priority on the resources that our consumers need and deserve. With over 60,000 individuals in various groups that are eligible for VR services, we need to increase the advocacy so that their needs can be heard and met in every area of the state.
- As a community, we support innovation and efforts to keep moving the system forward. The VRS Pilot with ProAct in Dakota County is being developed in a transparent way to promote system learning. If it works, we'll share it and if it doesn't, we'll share that too. We are working hard to bring the needed partners to the table to make this work and combine our strengths to see which consumers this approach serves best. The purpose of our pilot is learning. Similar to other pilot efforts including IPS and Rapid Engagement, our objective is to test out innovation using pilots and build upon any successes that can be shared for the benefit of consumers.
- Our relentless focus on continuous improvement means that over time, our efforts will help serve more people. While we may or may not be able to secure more funding, we will always be open to funding combinations and/or mechanisms for greater impact and better outcomes for competitive, integrated employment opportunities and advancement.
- As a community, we have seen some very encouraging outcomes with Motivational Interviewing (MI) at places including VRS, Rise, Goodwill Easter Seals and Courage Kenny among others. How can we build up Motivational Interviewing as a statewide proficiency and continue building communities of practices? And how can we build it together and integrate our communities better so we don't all have to "recreate the wheel" individually? The advisory committee believes that proficiency requires far more than a few days of training; rather, coaching circles and communities of practice is where people have the opportunity to apply the practices and receive helpful feedback improve practices and excel at Motivational Interviewing.

** End of session notes*